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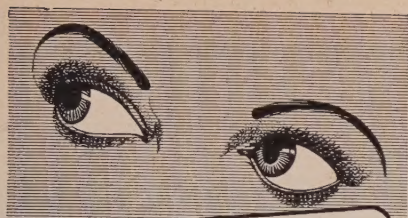
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THEATRE WORLD



Alexander Bender.

Sophie Stewart and Richard Bird in "Lady from Edinburgh"

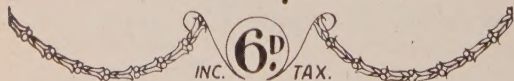
- The delightful new comedy by Aimée Stuart and L. Arthur Rose at the Playhouse Theatre provides splendid opportunities for the talent of Sophie Stewart and Richard Bird, who as Aunt Christabel the loquacious, managing, but lovable lady from Edinburgh and the forgetful, untidy Professor Dauntly steal the honours of a play in which there is splendid all-round acting from a clever supporting cast.



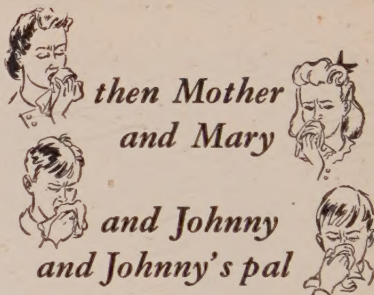
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Edited by Frances Stephens

June, 1945

Over the Footlights

THERE is Victory in Europe, and London is delivered from the attacks of the enemy. These tremendous facts have coloured our thinking during the past few weeks, but even now it is difficult to take stock for the future or to keep an eye on realities. For one thing, the German scene has persuaded us never again to look with scepticism on Shakespeare's corpse-strewn boards. The poison cup has indeed overflowed, and few dramatists would dare to snuff out sinister lives with such despatch!

It has been the fashion since VE-Day to contemplate our war achievements in various fields. The theatre can take pride in all that has been accomplished these past five years under incredible difficulties, as *Theatre World* has not been slow to point out, but the moment is not yet for feeling that the period of restriction is over. There is still the war in the East. The time will come, however, when the theatre is freer to take advantage of the great new interest in the drama and to direct the un-instructed into a nobler appreciation of a living art which has it in its power to lift the whole cultural level of the nation. We do not despair, for we know that up and down the country are men and women who are devoting their lives to this cause and firing enthusiasm in others; nor are we unduly pessimistic about the so-called bogey of commercialism. We admit the dangers, but we believe the new spirit is too strong to be denied expression, even through the narrower channels of drama that must pay.

There are signs everywhere of a new outlook. For instance, there is an excellent article by Dr. Herbert Read in the Spring issue of *Town and Country Planning*, the

quarterly publication of the Town and Country Planning Association, which deals admirably with the need for the right kind of drama centre in every fair-sized community. We salute also the little theatres, especially those in and around London where competition is great. The little Chanticleer, we notice, is running an Ostrovsky season, and the Gateway Theatre is another with an ambitious programme.

A sign of the times indeed is that the Sadler's Wells Theatre, which has been closed for nearly five years, is to re-open on June 7th, with a seven-weeks' season of the Sadler's Wells Opera Company. This theatre has been closed since September 7th, 1940, the day of the first big blitz on London. For some time it was used as a rest centre for bombed-out people. Now, once again, it will become the permanent home of Sadler's Wells Opera and Ballet.

To celebrate the first night of the season, the Sadler's Wells Opera Company will present the first performance of *Peter Grimes*, a new opera by the brilliant young English composer, Benjamin Britten, whose work is internationally known to music lovers. This is his first opera.

We have noted with interest that even the most excellent of war plays have not been able to make the grade of late. Thus *The Assassin*, which ran for only ten weeks, is to be followed at the Savoy Theatre on June 20th by the American hit, *Chicken Every Sunday*, which, as its title implies, should provide abundant laughter to suit the current mood. Later this year, Firth Shephard will also present a play by Rodney Ackland and another by Margaret Kennedy.

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New Shows of the Month

"The Duchess of Malfi"—Haymarket, April 18th.

"Perchance to Dream"—Hippodrome, April 21st.

"Desert Rats"—Adelphi, April 26th.

"Gay Pavilion"—Piccadilly, May 15th.

"The Skin of our Teeth"—Phoenix, May 17th.

"The Duchess of Malfi"

THE word "distinguished" is a hackneyed one in these days, but in the dictionary sense of "remarkable for quality, of high standing," this latest production at the Haymarket is distinguished indeed.

The satisfaction is as much visual as auditory. Each scene is a rich canvas of glowing colours against which the characters play out the tragedy in time and surroundings harmonious; this is indeed the meeting place of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. John Webster lacked the universality of Shakespeare, his humour and philosophy do not reach out to us over the centuries in the same way, but he knew how to touch a tale with grandeur, and the Haymarket production has all the

Below:

Margaret: I'm worried about you—desperate. You must get well.

Keneth Kent as Descius Heiss, and Victoria Hopper as Margaret, his daughter, in a scene from *The Shop at Sly Corner*, the thriller by Edward Percy, at the St. Martin's.



John Vickers

heroic qualities of stark tragedy in the grand manner.

Peggy Ashcroft as the ill-fated Duchess, whose brothers, the Duke and the Cardinal, visit with an awful vengeance of torture for her marriage to the Steward of her household, gives a flawless performance of equal stature in the light-hearted moments and in the growing horror of the period before her death. As de Bosola, the villain with a conscience and a philosopher withal, Cecil Truncer could not be bettered; one could almost call the play his. Leon Quartermaine as the Cardinal and John Gielgud as Ferdinand, the Duke, give finished studies of two men of twisted mind well worthy of a land and age that produced the Borgias. In the mad scene, Mr. Gielgud rises to great heights. Leslie Banks brings dignity to the part of Antonio the Steward, and among others who shine in a long and brilliant cast are Marian Spencer as Julia, Joy Harvey as Cariola, and Miles Malleon as Castruchio.

The masterly direction of George Rylands and the decor by Roger Furse and costumes by Beatrice Dawson must also be given special mention. F.S.

"Perchance to Dream"

IVOR Novello gives us the mixture as before; spectacle, charming tunes (though not to be compared with his best in *The Dancing Years*); and romance in plenty, this time of English vintage. Once again we can but marvel at Mr. Novello's versatility and hardiness, for he is on the stage in the leading role through most of the evening in addition to having devised entirely what is a mammoth work, even by modern standards.

Like *Three Waltzes*, this is a tale of three eras and of lovers who only come together at the end. The opening act is set in Regency days and Act II in the Victorian period, with the 1930's to bring it up-to-date. A hint of reincarnation pervades the whole, and the spirits of the departed are not to be denied their last act entrance. Mr. Novello plays in turn a knight turned highwayman, a Victorian choirmaster and modern young man, and has as feminine support those charming leading ladies, Rona Beaumont and Muriel Barron. Margaret Rutherford is another talented member of a long and worthy cast. We forecast that *We'll Gather Lilacs* will be the song hit of the show. F.S.

"Desert Rats"

THIS play, by Colin Morris, is shortly to finish its run at the Adelphi, and it is a matter for regret that a new play

of such merit and such outstanding acting should not have had a longer stay in the West End.

There seems no doubt that this is not the time to produce war plays, however worthy, or however gripping, and no-one could accuse *Desert Rats* of not telling an exciting story well.

Richard Greene and Manning Whiley are the officers of contrasted outlook (with, in addition, a personal drama to play out between them), who lead a desert patrol through incredible hardships and adventures to the outskirts of Tripoli, where death from hunger and thirst is the last spectre to be overcome before final rescue.

F.S.

"Gay Pavilion"

THERE is absolutely nothing to dislike about William Lipscomb's play, except that it does not do justice to the full-bloodedness of the Regent and his Mrs. Fitz-Herbert, that is, unless we have misread our history. As one or two critics have said, the padding of music should have been added to this particular version, an idea that leapt to the mind immediately we set eyes on lovely Mary Ellis in the guise of Maria. The "Prinny" of the piece, and this is not John Byron's fault, is too childish, by far, and Dick Sheridan was surely never so elegant in the life. In short, with the exception of one brief period, the play lacked the gusto of eighteenth century England.

That one period, however, was worth the visit in itself. In the second act, at the Pavilion, Brighton, the Queen and King George III arrive one after the other to visit their son and his supposed mistress. Muriel Aked is a real joy as Charlotte, an eccentric little figure with a passion for moving the furniture around. Then the arrival of the King and the best five minutes of the play, in which Frederick Valk breathes life into the furniture itself with a giant-like study of the mad monarch. All that came after was anti-climax.

Frank Allenby is the immaculate Sheridan, Peggy Ramsay appears as the Countess of Jersey and Gwynne Whitby as gauche Princess Caroline. A brief appearance and song from Percy Heming was much appreciated. Mary Ellis, delightful actress that she is, does all that is possible with Mr. Lipscomb's Maria Fitzherbert.

F.S.

"The Skin of our Teeth"

THORNTON WILDER'S modern allegory of Everyman seen through the medium of the comic strip has been some time in reaching our shores but, with its final symbol of the end of war and the problem of reconstruction, it could not have arrived at a more apposite moment.

This play is superb and deliberate "theatre," a crazy new twist to the constructivism of Meyerhold in which scenic



John Vickers

Mr. Mould: Is the coast clear?

Mr. Trout: Up to a few yards, yes!

Alfred Drayton as Mr. Trout (disguised as Madam Louise), and Robertson Hare as Mr. Mould (disguised as her son), in an hilarious moment from *Madame Louise*, the Vernon Sylvaine farce at the Garrick.

mechanics and the sense that we are witnessing a play are artlessly (or artfully) underlined throughout. Yet the trick incredibly works: through the riotous anachronisms and "asides" to the audience the spirit of the allegory, a history of mankind in its disasters, conflict, evil and constant struggle for intellectual knowledge and survival, emerges with a moving power and charm.

The originality of this play is in its imaginative construction and its suggestion of the eternal and terrible query that lurks behind every catastrophe—Ice Age, Deluge and War: is humanity, with its evil which so often seems to outweigh the divine, worth saving? This serious core gives the play at times an extraordinary poignancy, in spite of its general impression of a highly-coloured cartoon in which gusto, pace and razor-sharp innuendo jostle with cheerful inconsequence. Mankind is represented through a typical American family: Mr. Antrobus, the eternal faithful and faithless husband, the inventor and searcher after knowledge; Mrs. Antrobus, the eternal unimaginative but loyal wife and mother; Sabina, at once the eternal siren and the symbol of the common people, despairing of progress, crying out for the drug of the cinema; the ebullient son Henry, branded with the mark of Cain, the eternal destruc-

tive force let loose on the world in war. Life is depicted not through language but through the force and simplicity of the external symbol.

The play is superbly and imaginatively produced by Laurence Olivier, with décor by Roger Furse, and is a triumph for Vivien Leigh, who as Sabina, alternately seductive and gauche, carries the play on a flood-tide of verbiage with a masterly feeling for the subtle nuance of every phrase and implication. This is the finest performance this actress has given us since her incomparable Scarlett O'Hara, and in the

last Act it strikes deep. Cecil Parker as Mr. Antrobus has an emotional feeling and rugged strength, especially in the first scene, far removed from his normal polish; the Mrs. Antrobus of Joan Young is equally realistic and human and as a Fortune Teller in the Deluge Scene Ena Burrill has a sansculotte gusto and ferocity. Among the rest of a long and excellent cast the Dinosaur of the Ice Age scene, an enchanting and wistful mammal, recalls the charmingly-mimed animals of *Noah* and proves Miss Leigh's only rival in personality and charm.

A.W.

DECIMA KNIGHT

charming young singer and principal in Leslie Henson's *Gaieties*, now transferred to the Saville, where, with some new material added, this lively show bids fair to rival Mr. Henson's previous triumphs at the same theatre.



SPACE does not permit of full-length reviews of some other shows produced during the month. At the Whitehall, Phyllis Dixey is presenting that amusing comedy by Anthony Kimmins, *While Parents Sleep*, first produced at the Royalty in 1932. Miss Dixey finds full scope for her allure in the role of Lady Cattering.

The Embassy have followed James Parish's *Letters to a Lady*, in which Louise Hampton, Helen Shingler, Emrys Jones and Donald Strachan gave noteworthy performances, with a murder thriller of real old-fashioned gusto in *The Crime of Margaret Foley*, by Percy Robinson and Terence de Marney, in which Terence de Marney plays as dark a villain as one could wish, and there are excellent performances from Arthur Sinclair as an Irish butler, Judy Kelly as the unhappy lady in the case, Noel Morris as a bluff and unsuspecting victim, and Ian Fleming as an Irish Inspector of the Police.

The Night and the Music, super musical at the Coliseum, was produced on May 17th, and will be reviewed at length next month.

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 Whatever made
 my sweet Alfred
 come to Vienna
 and serenade me
 here.

RUTH
 NAYLOR
 as Rosalinda
 von Eisenstein
 and
 IRENE
 AMBRUS
 as Adele the
 maid, in the
 opening scene.



Gay Rosalinda"

AT THE PALACE THEATRE

TO say that this sparkling version of *Fledermaus* is a triumph for all concerned is to put it very mildly indeed. The love and joyousness of this lovely operetta firely matches the Victory spirit which seized the West End during the past weeks.

The strength of the production owes much to the inclusion of top line actors as well as to rate opera singers, and this, combined with Leontine Sagan's brilliant direction, lovely ballets by Wendy Toye and the beautiful decor and costumes, ensures an evening of real artistic satisfaction. Pre-

siding over all like the spirit of Strauss himself is the genius of Richard Tauber's conducting, a great personal triumph for one who has up to now earned his chief reputation in the theatre on the other side of the footlights.

The English adaptation from the Max Reinhardt—E. W. Korngold version, with original story by Meilhac and Halevy, is by Austin Melford and Rudolf Bernauer with lyrics by Sam Heppner. The music of Johann Strauss needs no introduction.

Tom Arnold and Bernard Delfont present the show, which is under the personal supervision of Mr. Delfont.



Rosalinda: You musn't talk to me like this—I have a husband now.

Alfred, an operatic tenor, and old admirer of Rosalinda, has followed her to Vienna and insists on serenading her at her home. (James Etherington as Alfred.)

Dr. Faike: It isn't a woman—it's a party. Given by Prince Orlofsky.

Gabriel von Eisenstein, Rosalinda's husband, is persuaded by his friend to go to the Prince's ball instead of keeping his rendezvous at the jail. (Bernard Clifton as Dr. Falke and Cyril Ritchard as Gabriel.)



Gabriel: I said to the magistrate, "Sir, think of my poor wife, sitting at home—hoping for the best—fearing the worst. Alone and uncomfortable in her sorrow."

Gabriel tells Rosalinda how after being sentenced by the magistrate for hitting a policeman he has been allowed to come home and say goodbye to her. Actually of course he intends to go to the Prince's ball and then on to the jail afterwards.



Above:

Aided by the mischievous maid, Gabriel prepares to go to the Prince's ball, while Rosalinda thinks he is off to the prison.

Above Right:

Alfred, the tenor, spends the evening with Rosalinda and dines and wines well in the comfort of Gabriel's dressing gown.

(Right):

Frankman: If you will kindly put on your clothes, Mr. Eisenstein, we'll be getting along.

The Governor of the local jail arrives in person to take Gabriel away, since he has not kept his promise to the Magistrate, and mistakes Alfred for his prisoner. The tenor is by now too inebriated to know what is happening and is taken away without a protest.

(David Davies as Frankman.)





Molly: My friend would have been dreadfully disappointed. He asked me specially to invite you.

Adele and Molly, her sister, arrive at Prince Orlofsky's Palace for the ball which has been arranged by Dr. Falke for the Prince's amusement and also to pay off an old score against Gabriel.

(*Esther Moncrieff as Molly.*)



Prince Orlofsky: Get up, my good woman—there's no need to sit.

The Prince is vastly amused by some of the guests as the Doctor introduces them.

(*Peter Graves as Prince Orlofsky*; *Jean Marion as Mrs. Greilinger.*)



(*Left*):

Gabriel arrives and is introduced to the Prince in the guise of a dashing nobleman from South America. The stage is set for some deliciously embarrassing situations for the unsuspecting Eisenstein.

Right:

RUTH NAYLOR

as Rosalinda von Eisenstein, disguised as
a Hungarian Countess at Prince Orlofsky's
ball.



Above:

CYRIL RITCHARD

as Gabriel von Eisenstein arrives incognito
at the Prince's Palace.

Right:

IRENE AMBRUS

as Adele, Rosalinda's maid, as she appears
in the second act at the ball.



Above:

Gabriel: You remind me of someone I know.

Gabriel fails to recognise his mischievous maid.

Left:

Rosalinda, in her disguise as a gay Hungarian countess, delights all with her singing of the Czardas.

Below:

The lovely Blue Danube ballet danced at the Prince's ball.





Orlofsky: Marquis, how can I thank you? You've made my party a success.

The fun waxes fast and furious when Gabriel dances with a fellow Spanish nobleman who, unknown to him, is none other than the prison Governor.



Frosch: I am not a flower—I'm not a fruit—neither am I animal, vegetable, or mineral.

Act III—Jay Laurier as Frosch the jailer.



Adele: I was born to act.

Adele, Molly and Frankman, the Governor, arrive at the jail after the ball.



Gabriel: Well, here we are . . . I've come.
Gabriel turns up at the jail very merry
after his gay party, little dreaming of the
complications that await him inside.

Gabriel: There seems to have been some
irregularity in the making of your hus-
band's arrest last night.
Gabriel disguised as a notary* con-
fronts Rosalinda and Alfred, who has
spent some fruitless hours in prison.

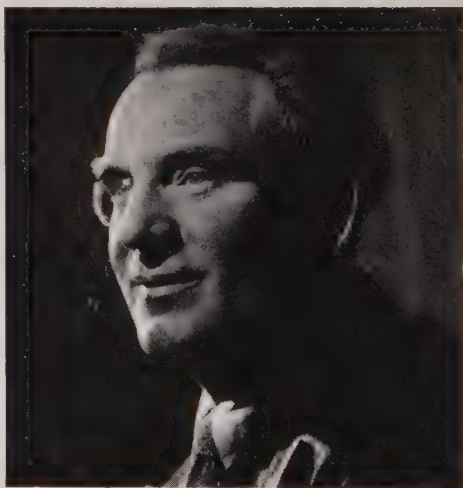


The colourful finale of *Gay Rosamunda*.

RICHARD TAUBER

- Few who have seen this enchanting version of *Die Fledermaus* will forget the inspired conducting of Richard Tauber, who already holds a big reputation in this country as one of the greatest singers of our day, and one whose personality is as friendly and attractive as his splendid voice.

Now, as the conductor of the symphony orchestra for this production, Richard Tauber has realised one of his greatest ambitions during his stay over here. There can be no doubt that his great knowledge and love of the Johann Strauss music, both as singer and musician, and the fact that he is so familiar with stage technique, has added immeasurably to his unique performance as a brilliant conductor.





The Galley Scene from *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Birthday Play for 1945.

Left to Right: PETER BELL as Pompey, DAVID READ as Caesar, TRISTAN RAWSON as Enobarbus, HORACE SEQUEIRA as Lepidus, ANTONY EUSTREL as Antony, W. E. HOLLOWAY as Agrippa, and GEORGE SKILLAN as Mecnas.



ANTONY EUSTREL as Antony and CLAIRE LUCE as Cleopatra in another scene.



DAVID READ as Caesar, VIOLA LYEL as Octavia, and ANTONY EUSTREL as Antony in the Birthday Play.

Stratford-upon-Avon Festival

PICTURES
BY
HOLTE.

● IN this and the following pages are scenes from some of the plays with portraits of the players in this year's Stratford-on-Avon Festival, together with our critic's review of what must be one of the most brilliant seasons in the history of the Memorial Theatre. Robert Atkins, Director of the Festival Company, than whom there is no finer Shakespearean actor and producer in the country, has produced all the plays this year.

The Season Reviewed

THIS year's Shakespeare Festival, the second under Mr. Robert Atkins' direction, includes two tragedies, *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*; three comedies, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*; one historical play of uncertain origin, *King Henry the Eighth*, and Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Here is repertory indeed. *Romeo and Juliet* will be added thereto next month.

A Producer's Festival

It may be called a producer's Festival, for all the plays have been produced by Mr. Robert Atkins on broadly similar lines, and the great success achieved with each one, abundantly evidenced by the audience, owes more to production than to any other element. In every play the producer's genius gave unity and vitality to the whole performance, which was notable for vigorous attack, brisk pace, pleasant grouping and, in comic scenes, much amusing "business," which always appeared to grow out of the lines and never to intrude upon them. People who love Shakespeare for his poetry can read the plays. Such are seldom satisfied in a theatre. Charles Lamb preferred his own imaginings to any actual performance. It is, therefore, wisdom in a producer to bring out the plot by telling the story as vividly and amusingly as possible. In these seven productions there is scarcely one dull moment. So enjoyable a Festival, with so few checks to pure and full entertainment, has not been seen for years.

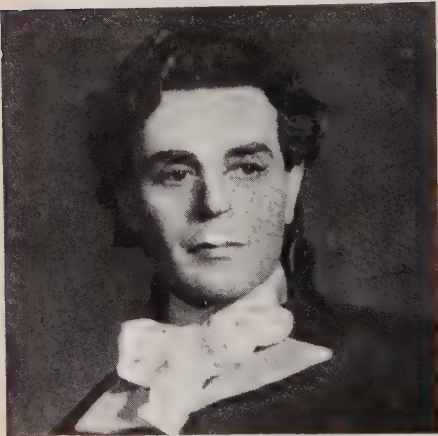
Among the company, by far the heaviest burden of acting is borne by Antony Eustrel, whose Protean prowess seems miraculous. He plays Iago, Antony, Ford, young Marlow, Benedick and Henry VIII; all this within a week. Few actors could present the appearance and speak the lines of so many dominant characters in so short a space of time. It were ungrateful to cavil if the characterisations seemed sometimes to lack depth. How could it be otherwise? An actor who essayed to enter into all their moods could hardly succeed, and might go mad.

Othello

Othello was a very gentlemanlike Moor, as played by George Skillan, whom it was good to see at Stratford again after an absence of some years. Between him and



CLAIRE LUCE as Beatrice



ANTONY EUSTREL as Charles Marlow



MOIRA LISTER as Desdemona

Harold Matthews

Desdemona, Iago seemed to practise mischief, rather than to work villainy. Moira Lister made a rather modern Desdemona, superficial in the early scenes, but her playing in the scene wherein Othello strikes her in the presence of her kinsman, come to recall him from Cyprus, was most moving and she acted with great power therefrom to the end of the play. She has a beautiful voice of unusual range. The inner integrity of Othello was manifest to the end by George Skillan's distinguished performance and in the strangling there was nothing squalid; it had the passionate dignity of a sacramental act. No word was spoken after Othello's self-destruction. Iago smiled with cynical malevolence and turned and made his exit. The party broke up and the curtain fell.

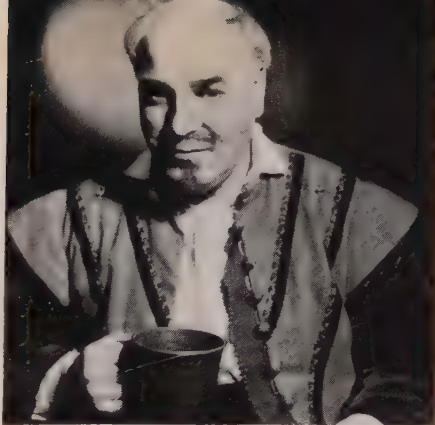
Antony and Cleopatra

The intrigue of *Antony and Cleopatra* was colourfully and romantically represented. From the moment soon after curtain-rise, when Cleopatra is borne on in a litter, attended by slaves and eunuchs, with Antony in thrall, like Keats' knight-at-arms with a difference, to her death in the Monument, Claire Luce's playing failed not to suggest the full legend, voluptuous and far from hum-drum, which attaches to the Queen of Egypt. Here was sufficient reason for Antony's conduct and the delighted audience sympathised. The varying moods and wilful wiles of Cleopatra were vividly displayed in a fascinating study. When her voice rose in angry passion, her words were indistinct but her meaning was never in question. She enjoyed magnificent support from Moira Lister as Charmian and Mary Honer as Iras. Antony Eustrel's physique seemed a little slight for Antony but his full and flashing eyes, vibrant voice and always vigorous attack, well became the part. David Read brought great dignity to the playing of Octavius, making him quite mature but his speeches were not always intelligible. Horace Sequeira well-portrayed Lepidus but was dim as the Clown with the worm. Enobarbus, the only straight man in the play, was sufficiently heartening in the safe hands of Tristan Rawson. David Peel provided a memorable moment as Eros in his last scene with Antony, and David March was a matchless Mardian.

The Merry Wives

The Merry Wives of Windsor was a double triumph for Robert Atkins. Himself played

(Continued on page 21)



ROBERT ATKINS as Sir Toby Belch



VIOLA LYEL as Mrs. Hardcastle



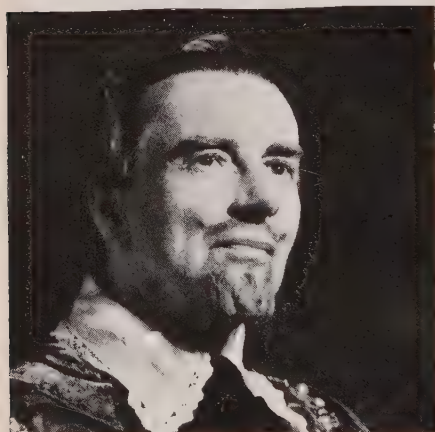
GEORGE SKILLAN as Dogberry



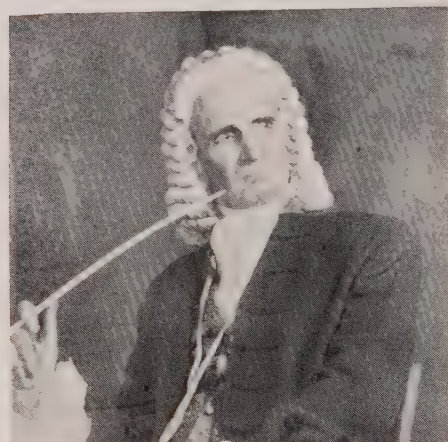
DAVID READ as Malvolio



DAVID PEEL as George Hastings



TRISTAN RAWSON as Don Pedro



W. E. HOLLOWAY as Mr. Hardcastle



PETER BELL as Tony Lumpkin



MARY HONER as Hero

Sir John Falstaff with abundance. His by-play with Ford's, alias Brook's, purse, his impatience with Mistress Quickly, his unfailing comic subtlety of invention were delightful to observe. Viola Lyel played Mistress Page with convincing vivacity and Claire Luce made Mistress Ford sufficiently alluring to render Ford suspicious. Antony Eustrel gave impetuous rein to Ford's suspicions but did not break the comic spell by acting a jealous husband.

Handsome Costumes

All settings and costumes in this Festival are handsome. *Much Ado About Nothing* is extremely well served in these respects by J. Gower Parks. Most of the action takes place in a fine Haddon Hall style interior or in a spacious and beautiful formal garden. Memory lingers gratefully over Tristan Rawson's fine presentation of Don Pedro and David Peel's sensitive acting as Claudio. The latter, a cad of the first water, with whom it is impossible to sympathise, was so played that the fortunes of Claudio and Hero took pride of place in the story. Claire Luce and Antony Eustrel as Beatrice and Benedick were well enough but each has done better. The songs were beautifully rendered by Colin Cunningham and the dances well arranged by Mary Honer.



ANTONY EUSTREL as Benedick and CLAIRE LUCE as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*.



PETER BELL as Tony Lumpkin and MARY HONER as Cousin Con in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Twelfth Night

In *Twelfth Night* every part was filled with great credit. The scenery, designed by Danaë Gaylen, was particularly pleasing and Olivia's dresses, by the same designer, were very handsome indeed. Claire Luce looked delightful in boy's attire as Viola and played so that her passion for Orsino, uncommonly well acted by David Peel, was always sufficiently obvious. Moira Lister made Olivia more than usually interesting and Mary Honer was a delightfully graceful and vivacious Maria. Robert Atkins did all that can be done with the part of Sir Toby Belch, which, at its best, is a tantalising reminder of Falstaff. David Read brought to Malvolio all the comic dignity required and was sufficiently outstanding in a very fine team.

King Henry the Eighth

The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth contains so much pageantry that the name of Herbert Norris on the programme as designer of costumes is very assuring. Guy Sheppard's scenery provided a worthy setting. Many of the tableaux are unforgettable. There is space to mention one only; Buckingham's farewell to the people of London as he goes to execution. The sorrowful words of the doomed Duke were spoken with sincerity by W. E. Holloway. Antony Eustrel's Henry was fascinating to watch, rough and bluff and a little raucous, the very embodiment of the popular idea of this much married monarch. George Skillan made Wolsey sufficiently sinister and Viola Lyel

(Continued overleaf)



Scenes from

“Twelfth Night”

Above :

The Kitchen Scene, showing, L. to R. : ROBERT ATKINS as Sir Toby Belch, MARY HONER as Maria, and PETER BELL as Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Left :

DAVID READ as Malvolio, MARY HONER as Maria, PETER BELL as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and ROBERT ATKINS as Sir Toby Belch in the Letter Scene.

secured sympathy by her restrained acting in the pathetic role of Queen Katherine. Moira Lister presented a decorative Anne Bullen.

Popular Goldsmith

It remains to report that the audience were more enthusiastic in their applause for

Oliver Goldsmith's comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, than for any of the plays of Shakespeare. It was taken at a rattling pace and certainly provided good theatrical fare. The set for Mr. Hardcastle's house, by J. Gower Parks, was very handsome and functioned well but the acting, save for David Peel's Hastings, was somewhat deficient in style, and, after all, Goldsmith is not Shakespeare.

Sadler's Wells Ballet

THE SEASON REVIEWED

by

Audrey Williamson

Right:

Robert Helpmann and
Michael Somes in *Dante
Sonata*.

PICTURE BY ANTHONY



THE Sadler's Wells Ballet season at the New Theatre, hastily arranged as a result of the cancellation of the proposed tour of South America following their visit to the Continent, has been marked by no new production or important revival, but it is an indication of the choreographic strength of this company that in spite of the absence of *Job*, *Nocturne* and *Wedding Bouquet* (in addition to the long list of fine ballets, headed by *Apparitions*, *Checkmate*, *Horoscope* and *The Wanderer*, which have not been performed over a long period) the dramatic variety of the repertoire is still considerable. De Valois' *The Rake's Progress*, Ashton's *Dante Sonata*, Helpmann's *Hamlet* and *Miracle in the Gorbals* remain the principal works to illustrate the mimeo-dramatic power and freedom from dance clichés which the ballet critics of Brussels and Paris were quick to recognise as the essential style of English ballet and its most important and individual contribution to the art.

New costumes for the Children of Light in *Dante Sonata*, suggestive of a Greek-style maternity gown in silhouette, have given an unfortunate new implication to the ethical conflict in this ballet and obscure the lithe, clear curve of the bodily movement which was magnificently revealed by the simple lines of Sophie Fedorovitch's original designs. The release of Frederick Ashton from the R.A.F., and the consequent renewal of his personal supervision in production, had aroused hopes for a more finely-correlated teamwork and subtlety in his ballets than the first performance of *Dante* this season seemed to me to fulfil.

Certainly in the past this ballet has had more co-ordination between dancers and music, although Margot Fonteyn, Pamela May, Celia Franca and Robert Helpmann were outstanding both individually and in their power to merge their interpretations into the emotional pattern of the ballet as a whole. Michael Somes danced his original part with his instinctive response to the nuances of the music and a poignant flash of child-like terror; but his mime strikes one as intuitive rather than consciously planned and uneven for this reason. A natural dancer, more sympathetically in tune with this part than any other he has created or played except that in *Horoscope*, he is not generally speaking a mime of the range of expression of David Paltenghi, who has played Somes' part in *Dante* for the past few years with great depth of feeling and a mental maturity which, although it may distort slightly the choreographer's conception of the part, was a possible and tragically applicable interpretation, suggesting spiritual responsibility for suffering where Somes suggests the trapped fear of an unsophisticated child.

In *Lac des Cygnes*, where there is a definite rôle to mime, Somes is less successful than in *Dante Sonata*, where it is atmosphere rather than character that must be conveyed. His third Act variation showed his phenomenal *ballon* to be unimpaired, but his partnering was noticeably weak and the feeling was unavoidable that through no fault of his own he was not yet ready to carry this four-act classical rôle which makes considerable demands on the

(Continued on page 25)



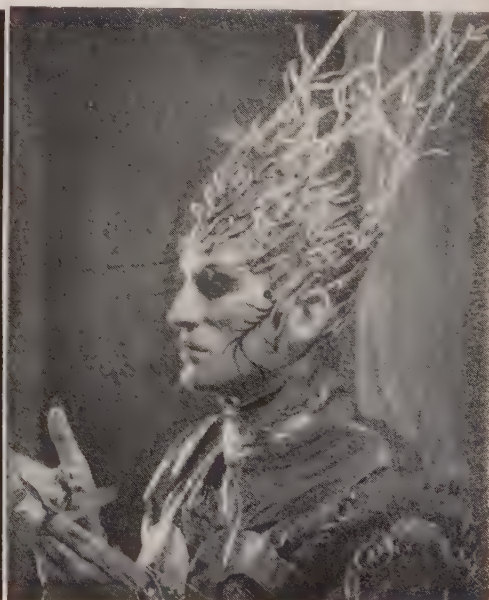
"The Dream" in India *(See page facing)*

The entrance of Theseus (Lt. Ian Grimble) and Hippolyta (Junr. Commander Rita Khosla), through the historical Lodi Battlements—while in the background a fanfare of ten trumpets is sounded.



I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.

Bottom (Warrant Officer Frank Payne) and Titania (Effie Barrett). All rehearsals by the all service cast were held in off-duty hours. There were ten men on the switch board which was controlled by telephone, and 25 floodlights were used in different parts of the setting.



Picture by Peter Powell

F/Lt. Ronald Waters as Oberon. This is his twenty-first production since joining the R.A.F. where he will be remembered for the number of shows he put on at The Arts Theatre, Cambridge, when practically all the stars appeared on Sundays to entertain the boys. His only other appearance in Shakespeare was his first job in London, understudying at the Westminster.

Francine's Flop by ERIC JOHNS

A CRISIS has occurred in Francine's life since Christmas Night when she gave me a play to read in bed as I left the cosy warmth of her Chelsea flat to walk home in the fog and frost.

You playgoers know Francine well, though you applaud her in the theatre under a more familiar name. Quite recently you cheered her to the echo, but at the same time you decided that the play which brought her back to the West End was a flop. That play you damned was the one I read on Christmas Night.

Next day over lunch I told Francine I thought she had a winner. To me it seemed that her exciting first entrance would in itself be worth the price of admission; the role gave her an opportunity to prove herself a pastmistress in the art of comedy, and the whole play seemed slick, smart, and sophisticated—in fact, just the thing to satisfy the craving of a war-time public.

Much was at stake. Francine was anxious to display her latent flair for comedy and to be seen in a sympathetic part in the West End. She also desired a successful run to pay off some heavy bills incurred during the furnishing of a new flat at war-time prices. Together we felt convinced the new play would prove the means to both ends. Anxious weeks of rehearsal and try-out followed, and then the premiere, when you threw flowers at Francine, but dismissed the play with a few unflattering epithets. While paying high tribute to her art, the critics deplored her choice of vehicle, but soon hoped to welcome her in a role worthy of her acknowledged genius.

It was a bitter blow and I hope it will never be my lot to experience the agony of mind Francine endured during the days immediately following the premiere, but now that it can be calmly analysed like a grim nightmare it seems to me that the experience of this failure has benefited Francine rather more than yet another success might have done. Another success in her triumphant career might have been taken as a matter of course, but this sudden and totally unexpected rebuff has taught Francine rather more about herself than she previously knew and has just gone to show that colossal good can be derived from a failure in the theatre, providing the artist is big enough and intelligent enough to survive the debacle. Francine emerged triumphantly and next time she opens in Town you will see an artist mellowed and refined by misfortune. In other words, you will see an artist a few degrees nearer perfection than the one who thanked you most gratefully for your reception on the night of the fiasco.

The stark consciousness of failure stared Francine in the face and stunned her for a

few days. She said quite simply, "People have paid to see me and I have let them down." Friends telephoned to say kind things; her faithful fans wrote flowery letters; and her dressing room was a bower of blooms from celebrities in every walk of life. But Francine refused to be hood-winked and lured into a Fool's Paradise. The statement of box office receipts was the only information she trusted—it was the ultimate barometer of success—but it fell steadily by £30 a night.

In order to dispel the ensuing bewilderment she avoided the theatre, apart from the time she was compelled to spend there in order to apply her make-up and play her part. She fled as soon as the curtain fell on each performance and occupied herself with anything under the sun apart from acting. In this manner she clarified her intellect and brought a new mental outlook to bear upon the situation. Before the end of the first week she began to take an interest once more, not only in her own part, but in those of her fellow players. With a pitiless eye she stood on the stage each night and studied the work of the others as well as her own performance. She has formulated well defined ideas and ideals concerning acting and with a critical eye she watched the cast, noting their faults, deploring their stupidity, and occasionally admiring a flash of inspiration. The same merciless gaze was directed upon her own performance. She was not spared her own scathing self-criticism.

Weighing up her artistic capabilities in the light of this flop Francine has become more truly aware of her actress-self. For ten years she has worked like a slave in the theatre, up and down the country, to achieve a near-perfection. The public likes it, and clamours for it; therefore she has made up her mind that their demands shall be satisfied and in consequence she proposes in future to consider plays from a more personal point of view. It is a different Francine that now reads the authors' scripts sent to her. Questions hover at the back of her mind as she turns the typewritten sheets. "How does this situation affect me? Is this part really good enough? Am I doing something I can believe in? Am I on the stage long enough 'for public consumption' during the evening?" Such considerations are ever present in her mind, tempered as it has been by the ordeal of tempered by the ordeal of failure. flashes of sheer genius in consequence of having suffered the heartbreak of this recent flop, which has enriched her temperament with darker and more significant colours than can ever be imagined by the artist whose path is eternally strewn with insipid pink rose petals.

Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT E. MAWBY GREEN

COMES spring, the New York Drama Critics meet outside their aisle seats to make their award for the best play of the season. Last year they decided no play by an American author warranted this distinction, but when balloting time came this year, there were several approved successes to choose from: *Harvey*, *I Remember Mama*, *A Bell for Adano* and *The Late George Apley*. However, it was a last minute entry that swept the field to win this citation: "To Tennessee Williams for his play *The Glass Menagerie* and its sensitive understanding of four troubled human beings." There was no play considered worthy enough to merit the foreign award.

The Glass Menagerie, presented by Eddie Dowling and Louis J. Singer, had an eventful career in Chicago where it practised for three months before blockbusting Broadway. The Chicago critics went all out for it and how they must have burned when the paying public almost completely ignored their recommendation. Here at last was something worthwhile and they were letting it fall by the wayside. All the more irritating because the Windy City had unashamedly supported for months such brothel pieces as *Good Night Ladies* and *Maid of the Ozarks*. Editorials followed in all the Chicago newspapers lauding *The Glass Menagerie* and from then on the show built to hit proportions.

The opening night in New York at the Playhouse was one of those rare occasions never here when the audience refuses to leave the theatre until the author has been found and carried on to the stage to join the cast and face a barrage of bravos. The reviews confirmed that this was the theatrical event of the year and local theatregoers needed no urging to besiege the box office.

Tennessee Williams has described his work as a "Memory Play." The effective and intricate setting by Jo Meilziner is an alley in St. Louis and the time is now and the past. On to the stage comes a narrator in the garb of a merchant marine. He leans against a railing, lights a cigarette and very quietly tells the audience that nothing of any importance is going to happen in this play. He is just going to reminisce about his life with his mother and sister in St. Louis a few years ago. All memories are closely linked with music and so he arranges with the musicians in the wings to provide the incidental memory provoking themes. The huge brick wall of a tenement then



Laurette Taylor, Eddie Dowling and Julie Hayden in *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams.

rises to reveal a dingy little flat and the narrator takes his place with the family as the son.

The mother, an old, blowsy and faded Southern belle who cannot forget her old way of life and the time she had "seventeen gentlemen callers," is the hard core around which Mr. Williams has built his sentimental excursion into frustration. She loves her children, is ambitious for their success, but she is incapable of understanding them. Her tongue is that of a nag and a scold, but she is also a tenacious and foolish and puttering old woman and so emerges as one of the most pathetic and terrible women the stage has even seen.

Her son works in a warehouse for a meagre pittance. They call him Shakespeare down there, for he is ambitious to write and he longs to escape and see the world, but he is the main support of his mother and sister and only escapes as far as the movies will take him nightly.

The daughter is a highly sensitive, shy cripple, who lies in her own world made up of her collection of little glass animals and old phonograph records. The mother

believes its time her daughter married and bullies her son into bringing home a "gentleman caller." From the warehouse he snares an unsuspecting friend, a big, good natured, gum-chewing Irishman. The Caller comes for dinner, but only once. He likes the daughter and could conceivably fall in love with her. But he is engaged to someone else and figures it is better if he does not come back again. From this tender encounter with romance springs the first bit of courage and confidence for the daughter. When the mother discovers the Caller will not be returning, she rants and rails at her son for having brought home an engaged man. This drives him away from the house—deserting his mother and sister as his father had done years before. Defiantly she shouts after him, letting all know she is again going to continue her struggle for security. The brick wall descends and the narrator appears. He has seen the world as a merchant marine, but he has not escaped, for wherever he goes the memory of the sister he loves follows.

This remarkable play is not without its faults. Mr. Williams' dialogue often leans towards the pretentious and he can use outlandish figures of speech which he probably believes are poetic and he will luxuriate in the sentimental, but the over-all picture is so impressive that you willingly forgive these imperfections. When he is at his best there is music in his dialogue; the emotions and moods he creates spread an aura of enchantment over the theatre and his bold and powerful creation of the mother is something to marvel at. Although this 31 year old playwright has written eight full length plays, *The Glass Menagerie* is the first to reach Broadway. Some seasons ago the Theatre Guild took on his *Battle of the Angels*, starring Miriam Hopkins, but closed it in Boston with the remark that one day Tennessee Williams would write a hit.

The acting of the entire cast of four is excellent. Julie Haydon is the wispy daughter, Anthony Ross the Gentleman Caller and Eddie Dowling plays the narrator and son. He has also served as co-director with Margo Jones. Laurette Taylor's portrayal of the mother will become one of the legends of the theatre. This is one of the greatest performances ever seen on the American stage. It is impossible to break



Henry Hull and Tallulah Bankhead in a scene from Philip Barry's new comedy, *Foolish Notion*.

down how she achieves her effects—there is her quiet voice with its subtle modulations; the repetition of lines and the infinite variety of phrasings; the tiny accurate gestures; her mobile face with its wonderful slow smile and so very much more, making her characterisation so complete and perfect. When the play is over and she takes her curtain calls, there is a shock and a sudden realisation that Miss Taylor has a life outside that of the mother. Until *The Glass Menagerie*, the biggest success of her career was *Peg o' My Heart* in 1912, written by her husband, Hartley Manners, as a wedding present. In 1914 she took *Peg* to London and duplicated her New York triumph. She retired from the stage in 1929 after her husband's death. The part of Mrs. Midget in a revival of *Outward Bound* in 1939 won her back to the footlights for a brief interlude and now in 1945 she has the best part of her career. We hope Miss Taylor will

(Continued facing page)

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make the trip to London again, for we can think of nothing better for a post-war present than the opportunity to see her as the mother in *The Glass Menagerie*.

Two other famous actresses, Katharine Cornell and Tallulah Bankhead, preceded Laurette Taylor to New York to win both critical and popular acclaim. Unfortunately they must follow Miss Taylor in this article and perhaps they will not get full justice here.

After playing to salutes from the soldiers on the European war front in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, Katharine Cornell was persuaded to continue this revival on Broadway—making the third time since its American premiere in 1931. Elizabeth Barrett is Miss Cornell's best loved characterisation and her ardent admirers are flocking to the Ethel Barrymore theatre. She is still the epitome of stage glamour and her portrayal is worked out to the finest detail. While Miss Cornell's performance has lost none of its luminous quality, Rudolf Besier's play has decayed with time. It is sad to report the giggles are beginning to come in the wrong places.

With two exceptions, the cast is the same that toured the fighting front. Brian Aherne is co-starred as Robert Browning, the role he originally created over here. Fourteen years ago, when the play was young, we admired his performance greatly, but to-day it strikes us as a classic example of over-acting. McKay Morris is the villainous father Barrett, and once again Brenda Forbes goes sailing across the stage as Wilson, the maid. Guthrie McClintic has directed, of course, and the setting designed by Jo Mielziner for the original production is on view. Miss Cornell has expressed her desire to tour the fox-holes of the Pacific in the Fall.

For its third production of the season, the Theatre Guild is starring Tallulah Bankhead as Sophie Wing, actress, in Philip Barry's newest comedy *Foolish Notion*. Sophie's husband (Henry Hull) disappeared in the war and has been declared legally dead. She is about to marry her leading man (Donald Cook), when word comes her husband is not dead but practically on her doorstep. While awaiting his arrival the bitterness set in. The wife, her fiancé, her father-in-law (Aubrey Mather) and her adopted daughter (Joan Shepard) each imagines how the reunion will go. Two of these fantasy sequences are completely successful: the adopted daughter sees the reunion as a melodrama in the worst Grade B movie tradition, with her mother and her leading man as very dark villains trying to poison and stab her father. Sophie sees it as the biggest scene in her career. A great actress (Mildred Dunnock) with whom she believes her husband has been living, presents her with an urn containing his

(Continued on page 31)

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Amateur Stage

A Course on the Production of Amateur Opera is announced. It will take place at the Polytechnic, Regent Street, W.1, on August 28th to September 1st next, and the director will be Mr. Frederick Woodhouse, Music Adviser to the Barking Education Committee and director of "Intimate Opera." A strong organising committee has been formed, including representatives of C.E.M.A., N.O.D.A., Carnegie Trust. The fee for the course is 30/-, and the secretary for all communications is Miss N. Newton, National Council of Social Service, 23, Bedford Square, W.C.1.

The aim of the course is to give those interested in Amateur Operatic Societies and in the performance of opera in schools an opportunity to widen their knowledge, exchange experiences and discuss problems. It is hoped that annual Courses may result from this beginning. The programme outlined is comprehensive, and its first item, choice of opera, is substantial enough. For so many musical societies opera means musical comedy, and if our post-war societies intend to return to much of the outworn nonsense of the past it will be a superb example of marching backwards. Dare one suggest that even "G. & S." may not meet the needs of the young post-war generation?

However, the news of this course is very welcome, and many people will wish Mr. Woodhouse much success on his initial effort. Those intending to attend the course are advised to make early application, certainly not later than June 11th.

TO attract one in five of the population of Braintree to performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the creditable achievement of Braintree Shakespeare Players Association. Over 3,500 people attended the fifteen performances. *Romeo and Juliet* will be the next production.

An original play, *No One Will Know*, which has had several performances in the Epsom-Sutton area, was given again at Civic Hall, Croydon, in May, by Beddington and Wallowington Summer Entertainments.

We are asked to announce that if any groups have done experimental work with the plays of Mr. William Saroyan, will they communicate with Mr. J. Roderick Webb, Flimby Vicarage, Maryport, Cumberland, who is concerned with forming a Saroyan-lovers society.

THE People's Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wish to announce the result of their recent Play Competition. The winner of the £20 prize is Mr. Frank Carpenter, of "Aldona," Mount Hawke, Truro, Cornwall, whose play *Some are Born Great* was the judges' final choice. Under the terms of the competition, the People's Theatre

(Continued on facing page)

have first refusal on the first production of the play.

This splendid amateur répertory company is surely unique of its kind in the country, and is a shining example to amateur groups and repertory theatres alike. For thirty-four years, through two major wars and a disastrous trade depression, this theatre has been presenting plays continuously, and not just common or garden plays either. *The Motherly and Auspicious*, by Maurice Collis, and *The Banbury Nose*, by Peter Ustinov, had their world premieres there; *Red Roses for Me*, by Sean O'Casey, its English premiere, and *Purple Dust* by the same author is another English premiere of which there is no trace of a previous performance. When space permits, we should like to give the full story of this splendid undertaking.

Echoes from Broadway (Continued)

ashes. Sophie holds up the urn in majestic make believe, mumbling dramatically: "This was a man." She has a delicious time with her sorrow then goes looking around for an appropriate place to park the urn. A spot on top of a harp is celestial, but a little clumsy, so she settles for a more commonplace table. Sprinkling flower petals over the urn, she bows her head and tosses her hair over his ashes. The other two sequences are dull and disappointing. The husband finally shows up and it seems there was another girl (Barbara Kent) he was in love with all the time so nobody had anything to worry about anyway. Mr. Barry has taken his cue for *Foolish Notion* from Robert Burns' "O wad some power the giffie gie us to see ourselves ithers see us" and adds his own observation that these imagined events act as a balm for the dreamer and rid him of fear. Be that as it may, but the fact remains Mr. Barry has written a most uneven play. It is pretentious, extravagantly overwritten and the constant shifting from reality to fantasy never fuses into a whole. The press was almost unanimously unfavourable and the shocked Theatre Guild wrote letters to their subscribers asking whether they agree or disagree that this "is one of Mr. Barry's most interesting and entertaining experiments." They have not announced the results, but we suspect their members like this mixture of the realistic and fantastic only a little better than they did Mr. Barry's all-fantastic plays *Hotel Universe* and *Here Come the Clowns*. His best liked plays by public and press are pure comedies like *The Philadelphia Story*. The tempestuous Tallulah with her rolling pass voice makes no bones about which rein she prefers. In her hands Sophie Wing is earthy and all Tallulah, which fortunately for the Theatre Guild is the way her audience likes her.

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Sadler's Wells Ballet

(Continued from page 25)

dancer without classical style is too often seen in rôles where it should be an absolute necessity.

Classicism, it cannot be too often repeated, is a question not only of footwork but of balance in carriage, the careful alignment of head, body and limb, and spiritual as well as physical poise. It has been very well shown this season in Pamela May's finely danced Swanhilda in *Coppelia*, a beautifully-built and enchanting Goldilocks without her three bears and most strikingly of all in the performances of the *Aurora* and *Casse Noisette adagios* by Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann, which have been marred only in Fonteyn's case by a sudden recurrence of curved *Sylphides* arms in the supported arabesques of the *Aurora fas de deux*. Otherwise these *adagios* have been models of meticulously-timed partnering, execution and attack in two of the greatest examples of Russian classicism in the dance, and performed in white costumes against plain black curtains their clarity of line has been revealed with unusual purity. Helpmann's stylish performance here and in *Giselle* has re-emphasised his pre-eminence in England as a *danseur noble* and the fruits of his control and refusal to force his effects are now apparent; at thirty-six he is at the height of his powers, light, supple in limb, effortless and finished, and with a number of good dancing years ahead of him. In dancing as in other arts it is the artist of quality and intelligence who has the greatest powers of survival.

THE Ballet Rambert, with orchestra under the direction of H. J. Rober, will be at the King's Theatre, Hammer-smith, for the week commencing June 4th. Artists appearing include Sally Gilmour, Elizabeth Schooling, Joan McClelland, Walter Gore, Frank Staff, and Lulu Dukes in her original role of Peter, in a revival of *Peter and the Wolf*.

This will be Londoners' first opportunity of seeing the two new ballets, *Simple Symphony* with choreography by Walter Gore, music by Benjamin Britten and decor by Ronald Wilson, and *The Fugitive* with choreography by Andrée Howard, music by Leonard Salzedo and decor by Hugh Stevenson, who also devised the story.

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